

Statement on Congressional Action on Intelligence Reform Legislation

January 24, 2008

Last August, Congress passed the Protect America Act, which updated our foreign intelligence surveillance law to adapt to today's technology and to meet today's threats. This bipartisan legislation has aided our efforts to monitor the communications of terrorists and other foreign intelligence targets.

Unfortunately, Congress set this legislation to expire on February 1st. That is just 8 days from today—yet the threat from Al Qaida will not expire in 8 days.

If Congress does not act quickly, our national security professionals will not be able to count on critical tools they need to protect our Nation, and our ability to respond quickly to new threats and circumstances will be weakened. That means it will become harder to figure out what our enemies are doing to recruit terrorists and infiltrate them into our country.

Last fall, the Senate Intelligence Committee completed its work on a bipartisan bill to modernize our foreign intelligence surveillance law. I commend Senators Rockefeller and Bond, the committee's chairman and vice chairman, for leading the effort to complete work on this bill.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's bill contains many provisions that our intelligence officials say they need to protect our country. The bill would maintain the vital flow of intelligence on terrorist threats. It would protect the freedoms of Americans while making sure we do not extend those same protections to terrorists overseas. And it would provide liability protection to companies now facing billion-dollar lawsuits only because they are believed to have assisted in efforts to defend our Nation following the 9/11 attacks.

This bill still needs some changes, but I am optimistic that with good will on both sides, we can make those changes quickly. So I ask congressional leaders to follow the course set by their colleagues on the Senate Intelligence Committee, bring this legislation to a prompt vote in both Houses, and send me a bill that I can sign before the Protect America Act expires on February 1st.

Congress's action—or lack of action—on this important issue will directly affect our ability to keep Americans safe.

Remarks to the “Congress of Tomorrow” Luncheon in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

January 25, 2008

Thank you all. Thank you. I want to thank Tom; he read it just like I wrote it. [*Laughter*] Thanks for your warm welcome. I'm glad to be with you. I'm looking forward to spending some of the afternoon with you, and then I've got to get back to write the State of the Union he was talking about.

Two issues I'm going to talk about in the State of the Union require our immediate attention, and that's an economic growth package that will keep this economy of ours healthy and legislation making sure our professionals—our intelligence professionals have the tools they need to protect the United States of America.

I am confident in the long-term strength of our Nation's economy. I believe that the fundamentals are sound. I know the entrepreneurial spirit is high. We have a flexible, we have a resilient, and we have a dynamic economy. But there are some uncertainties. And after a lot of thought, I called on the Congress, and your leaders responded to enact a growth package so we can reduce the risk of an economic downturn this year.

Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner have demonstrated strong leadership. They reached an agreement on a proposal that will have a positive impact on our economy. Congress should move it quickly. And I understand the desire to add provisions from both the right and the left. I strongly believe it would be a mistake to delay or derail this bill.

This package is big enough to affect the economy in positive ways. It will provide immediate help, and it's temporary. The entire package is tax relief. There are no tax increases, no unnecessary spending or regulatory projects, income tax cuts for a lot of people, as well as bonus depreciation for small—for our businesses and small business expensing. It's a sound package. It makes a